

bed - White House

Drawn by

Furukawa

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Curios and Relics  
Furniture  
Beds  
White House

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

New York Tribune Feb 12, 1926



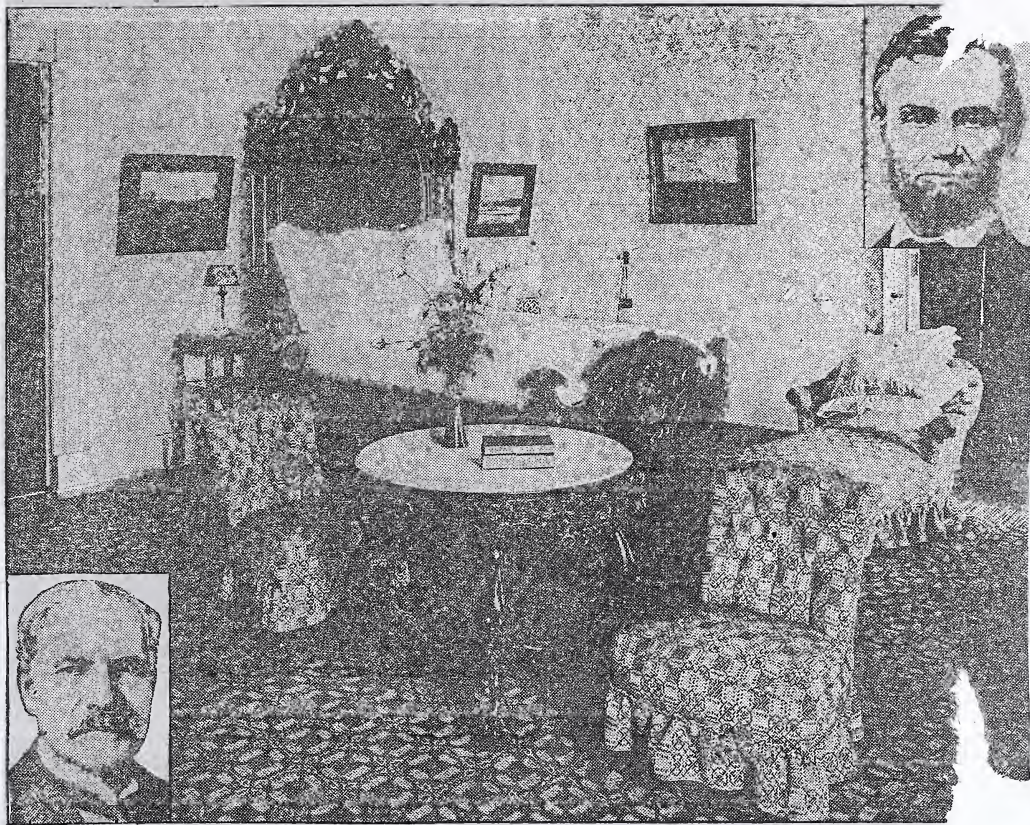
*The Lincoln Bed in the White House, for Which Mrs. Coolidge Crocheted  
Her Beautiful Coverlet*

Copyright by R. W. Magee

New York Tribune Feb 12 1926



## *MacDonald Will Sleep in Lincoln's Bed*



—Harris-Ewir

**HISTORIC BED.**—A new man of the people, Ramsay MacDonald of Great Britain, will occupy the bed used by Lincoln, during his stay at the White House. The prime minister will land in United States Friday for peace  
ence with President Hoover. Lower inset shows MacDonald and upper inset Lincoln at time he was preside

## MAC DONALD WAS GIVEN FAMOUS LINCOLN BED

### *Premier Rested on the Couch of Famous President.*

During his stay in the White House Premier MacDonald, the tall, gaunt Scot upon whose shoulders has rested so large a share of the responsibility for maintaining world amity, has been ensconced in a room which is ripe with the associations of Americanism.

For Premier MacDonald has occupied the famous Lincoln bed, that nine-foot Goliath of sleep, carved from American walnut, which was brought in to give nocturnal comfort to the great, loose-jointed frame of the immortal Lincoln.

The room in which this bed rests has recently been restored by President Hoover in the best manner of the Lincoln period—so that in addition to the bed there are a number of other pieces of American walnut.

For it was during the mid-nineteenth century when the vast tracts of the middle west were coming into their own, that the beauty and utility of American walnut began to find nation-wide favor. Walnut had always been used, of course, but American walnut grew but sparingly in many portions of the colonial seaboard, whereas thru the entire middle west walnut was found in every woodland copse and was employed by early craftsmen for his more favored furniture.

Truly a "Lincoln bed"—presumably from the rugged hinterland from which Lincoln himself sprang, represents a combination of essentially American associations which may have appealed greatly to the active imagination of Premier MacDonald—may, in fact, have aided materially in creating the background of understanding which characterized the premier's dealings with the President.

CHICAGO ILL POST  
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1929.





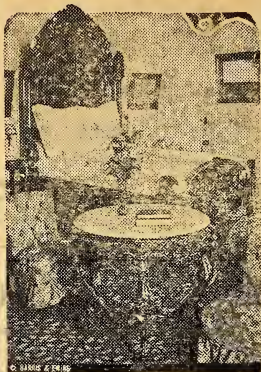
When Ramsay MacDonald, prime minister of Great Britain, visited Washington he was a guest at the White House, and slept in the bed used by Abraham Lincoln when he occupied the executive mansion. The bed, built in Springfield, Ill., especially for President Lincoln, is nine feet long and six feet wide.

HELLEVILLE OHIO STAR (wily)  
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1931.

FRANKFEL Disputak

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6 1931

### LINCOLN'S BED



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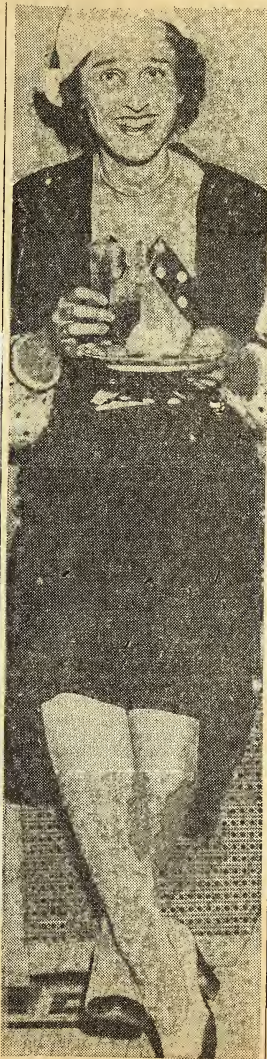


## Mrs. Jim Roosevelt Bans Lincoln Bed

The massive bed in which President Lincoln slept while in the White House "looks and feels too spooky" for Mrs. James Roosevelt, the former Betsy Cushing of Boston.

While guests at the White House have considered it a rare privilege to be allowed to sleep in the bed used by the Great Emancipator, young Mrs. Roosevelt has consistently refused to emulate them, it was revealed today by a friend to whom President Roosevelt related the incident.

She shares the feeling expressed by some others that there is something eerie in the Lincoln study, that the spirit of the martyred President still lingers there.



MRS. JAMES ROOSEVELT

The Wescott Hotel  
Richmond, Indiana  
January, 15, 1937

Dr. Louis A. Warren  
Fort Wayne, Indiana

My dear Dr. Warren:

In the Jan. 2 issue of The Saturday Evening Post in the article Mrs. Mcadoo, giving an account of the Wilsons in the White House she made a mistatement when she said that the bed upon which Abraham Lincoln died was in the White House. Of course you know this is not a fact. The bed upon which President Lincoln died is as you know in the Chicago Historical Society. Museum in Lincoln Park, Chicago. I had an exact duplicate of it in the house in which Lincoln died, 516 Tenth Street, Washington. The original bed was purchased from the Petersen family about 1890 by Mr Chas. Gunther of Chicago who had a large collection of relics and after his death his son sold the entire collection to the Chicago Historical Society a quite a large sum.

I do not suppose it is worth while to correct Mrs. Mcadoos statement, in fact it might of been a typographical error on the part of The Saturday Evening Post.

There is a bed in the White House upon which President Lincoln slept. It is one he had specially made, very large. It is I understand used by the occupants of the White House and it has an historic value.

I always took great pleasure in telling the true story in Washington because as you have seen the bed there it is much too short for a man six feet five and more than half of the people viewing it made that remark so I had to tell the whole story.

It is rather too bad that such a statement was made, at least a half a dozen people in Richmond have called my attention to it. If you did not read the article I refer to I thought it would interest you to have this letter from me.

Sincerely yours,

Lewis G. Reynolds

White House

January 18, 1937

Mr. Lewis G. Reynolds  
The Wescott Hotel  
Richmond, Indiana

My dear Mr. Reynolds:

Thank you for your very interesting letter about the Lincoln bed.

I wish I had known about the extra large one in the White House, as I should like to have made reference to it in a recent article I prepared.

Possibly while I am in Washington this spring, I will be able to get a glimpse of it, if it is at all possible for me to get into the White House.

The statement which you mention in the Saturday Evening Post skipped me and I will be very glad to look it up, although I doubt whether any refutation of it would be of any value.

Very truly yours,

LAW:EB

Director



# ABOUT LINCOLN'S BED---A NEW PROTEST

President Truman's mother is going to get a letter from a member of the Houston branch of the Lincoln family politely demanding an explanation as to why she refused to sleep in the Abraham Lincoln bed in the White House.

"I'm not going to be discourtageous—at least not in this letter—because, after all, Mrs. Truman is 94 years old and has a fractured hip," said Earl F. Hanks, whose grandfather, Dennis Hanks, was a brother of Nancy Hank Lincoln, mother of the Great Emancipator.

## Didn't Like Remark

"I'm not even positive that Mrs. Truman said she'd rather sleep on the floor than in the bed where Abraham Lincoln slept," said Mr. Hanks. "But if she did, it has all the earmarks of what you might call a lowdown, dirty remark."

Mr. Hanks, a Southern Pacific locomotive engineer, is 54 and lives at 2320 Chestnut.

## Confirmed by Pat Neff

The Lincoln bed story came to light Friday during the President's visit to Waco. Pat Neff, president of Baylor University, which conferred an honorary degree on the Chief Executive, vouched for the

authenticity of the story but declined to reveal the original source.

Mr. Hanks has been burning like fire under his boiler ever since he read the story.

## Suggests a Clean Sweep

"Now, I'm not going to say so in my letter," said Mr. Hanks, "but it seems to me if Mrs. Truman would sweep behind her own door, she might be doing some good. Why, the idea of any American woman—particularly the mother of the President—saying she'd rather sleep on the floor than in the bed Abraham Lincoln once occupied!

"It's nothing less than a shame to keep the old North-South feud going in the White House. It makes me think of fascism. I feel hurt about the whole thing. Why, I wouldn't have said a thing like that in a million years. I was raised different."

## Flag Hung on Bed

Honest Abe would never had made any bones about sleeping in a bed where any member of the Truman family had slept, Mr. Hanks believes.

And to clinch that point he tells of the time the Civil War Presi-

dent hit the hay in a bed with the Stars and Bars of the Southern Confederacy hanging on the headboards.

"My father was a Kentuckian," he says. "His name was Charles Dennis Hanks, and he was a Confederate soldier. After the war, when Lincoln was visiting in my father's home, it happened that there was nowhere for him to sleep except in the bed with my father. Now, father was an unreconstructed Rebel, and he kept the Confederate flag over the head of his bed. He thought Abe was a damned Yankee when he saw that flag."

## Laughed

Instead, the story runs, Lincoln just laughed and said, "All right, kid, if you still feel that way, stay with it!"

Then he stripped down to his long flannel underwear, and crawled in beside Cousin Charles under the South's proud, defeated banner.

It was Dennis Hanks, the Houston man's grandfather, who took young Abe Lincoln into his Indiana home and there taught the President-to-be how to read and write, says Mr. Hanks. But living in Indiana and Illinois and



EARL F. HANKS . . . he's burning like the fire under his boiler.

even in Washington never made Lincoln forget that he was born a Southerner, the railroad man insists.

## Always Loved the South

"Abraham Lincoln always loved the South," Mr. Hanks declared. "That fact is an old tradition in our family. He never forgot that he was born in Kentucky. Of course, he loved the United States, too, and I have no doubt that he even thought fondly of the state of Missouri.

"And he was a man who could sleep anywhere."

## Believes Apology Deserved

If Mrs. Martha Truman really said she'd rather sleep on the floor, Mr. Hanks feels that he, his daughter Nancy, the other members of his family—and for that matter, all loyal Americans—deserve an apology from the President's mother.

At any rate, that is the burden of his letter.



## Abraham Lincoln Slept Here

THE MOST FAMOUS single entity in the White House—outside of the President, himself, and his family—is the Lincoln bed. It is fully nine feet long, from solid rosewood headboard to footboard, and it was bought for the giant among leaders by his wife, Mary.

Every president since Lincoln has seemed to love it, Jacqueline Kennedy has said. Theodore Roosevelt slept in it. So did Calvin Coolidge. So did John F. Kennedy in the first days of White House residency.

★ ★ ★

BUT LINCOLN himself, the man whose birth date we honor Sunday, was less pleased than most. It was one of the lavishly expensive pieces of furniture which Mary purchased without, apparently, counting the cost. When the bills started coming in, fearing her husband's anger, Mrs. Lincoln asked that the amount of the bills be kept from him; but the commissioner of public buildings told Lincoln anyway.

"I'll pay it out of my own pocket!" flared the Emancipator. "It would stink the nostrils of the American people to have it said that the President of the United States approved a bill overrunning an appropriation for flub-dubs for this damned old house!"

★ ★ ★

MARY TODD LINCOLN was later officially declared insane. The courts declared her insane when, after Lincoln's death, his widow claimed to be destitute—though she had inherited in excess of \$36,000 and been given \$10,000 more by public subscription. Congress awarded her also a year's presidential salary and an annual pension.

But she was known as a wild spender, so her claim to poverty might have been accepted . . . had she not been

discovered, in 1875, carrying \$57,000 in securities in her pocket.

It was then that the courts acted.

Many historians, including White House authority Perry Wolff, believe that the insanity charge was wrong. Had psychiatry in the 19th Century been as advanced as it is today, Wolff told me, Mary Todd might have been considered no more than highly neurotic; a psychiatrist might have talked her out of seeing "mediums" who gave her bad advice, and would have taught her to live with the sniping abuse heaped upon her by the public and the press. Psychiatry certainly could have curbed her most corruptive weakness—vain extravagance.

★ ★ ★

BUT PSYCHIATRY was unknown in Washington. So Mary went her reckless way.

She spent many thousands of dollars on clothes for herself, putting Lincoln deeply in debt. The height (or depth) of her extravagance could be noted when, after the death of her favorite son from typhoid, Mary asked for "the very finest and blackest and lightest long crepe veil. I want a very, very fine black crepe, round corners and folds."

Still, out of her tragic misadventures with money, Mary Todd produced the most famous single piece of furniture in the White House, and therefore probably in the land. It is the first king-length bed ever made, as far as we know, and is historically an exquisite, however extravagant, national treasure.

The Lincoln bed has provided many presidents with solace and inspiration. Yet, between a war and a woman, one wonders if Lincoln himself ever spent an untroubled night on it . . .

## Officials Say Lincoln Bed Is Truly His

By RITA REIF

**A** CONTROVERSY raged throughout the day yesterday over who had purchased the most famous furnishing in the White House—Lincoln's bed.

The question arose Thursday night when Mrs. John Newton Pearce, curator of the White House, spoke at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Following a flurry of inquiries, the White House late yesterday announced that the richly carved bedstead was purchased during the Lincoln administration. Tradition holds that Mrs. Lincoln actually made the purchase, although her name does not appear on the bill of sale.

Speaking before a gathering of 200 persons, Mrs. Pearce had said:

"A journal of the period has recently been found which shows that the bed was used in a guest room of the White House during the Administration of James Buchanan [Lincoln's predecessor]."

The document in question, she had said, maintained that the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, slept in the bed during a visit to the White House in October, 1860. (The Lincolns moved into the Presidential mansion the following spring.)

### Journal Cited

In clarifying the mystery, Pamela Turnure, press secretary to Mrs. John F. Kennedy, said that the journal cited was an article from the May 12, 1862 issue of The Daily Alta, published in San Francisco. The account, appearing under the headline: "The Lincolns Redecorate," mentions that the guest room, known as the Prince of Wales Room, had been redecorated. The article appears to give no basis for Mrs. Pearce's statement.

The bed, now famous as the Lincoln bed, is described in the journal's account as follows:

"The principal feature of the room is the bed interior. It is eight feet wide by 9 feet long, of solid rosewood. The sides are cushioned and covered with purple print satin. The headboard is a base of rich carved work, rising 8 feet above the bed and having an oval top. Twenty feet above the floor, overspreading the whole, is a magnificent canopy, from the upper carved work of which the drapery hangs in elegant folds being in the form of a crown, the flower ornament upon which the American shield with the stars and stripes carved thereon. The drapery is a rich purple satin print, and otherwise ornamented with the finest gold lace. The carved work is adorned with gold gilt."

### Two Bills of Sale

Miss Turnure said that vouchers for two rosewood beds are on file in the National Capitol Parks Service in Washington. The first such bill of sale, dated May 29, 1861 (after the Lincolns had moved into the White House) is for a rosewood bed and canopy purchased from William H. Sharyl, a Philadelphia furniture dealer. This is believed to be the bill of sale for the Lincoln bed.

The second voucher shows that another rosewood bed and canopy was ordered on December 21, 1864, Miss Turnure said.

Mrs. Pearce's statement had been greeted by doubt and surprise here and in Washington. When apprised of her comments Marvin Schwartz, Victorian expert of the Brooklyn Museum, said that "Buchanan's taste was for Renaissance and Louis XIV furnishings." The bed in question is pure Victorian in style.

Prior to the White House statement, Bess Furman, author of the book, "White House Profile," said that the Lincolns definitely had purchased the bed. She noted that the bill of sale was on file at the National Capitol Parks Service and that it had been found during the Truman Administration, when the White House was restored.

Mr. Truman, reached by telephone in Independence, Mo., said that he could not remember whether the bill of sale existed but that it was his impression that the entire suite of Lincoln furniture, including the bed, was purchased during the Lincoln Administration.

Mrs. Pearce could not be reached for comment.





# Nine-Foot Mattress For Abe

Americans who have trouble getting to sleep nights might take a tip from our 16th President, Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln, who was legendary for his plainness and simplicity in all other matters, liked the luxury of a long bed—and thereby hangs a fascinating footnote to history.

The famous Lincoln Bed in The White House is notable for its luxury and comfort. It stretches a full nine feet long and is almost six and a half feet wide! Almost every President from Lincoln's day until the Theodore Roosevelt Administration slept on the Lincoln Bed. Teddy Roosevelt was the last President to sleep on the Lincoln Bed regularly, but today it is still in use. The Lincoln Bed is in the principal guest room of The White House, and especially-honored VIP's who are the President's over-night guests usually get the honor of sleeping on it.

The National Association of Bedding Manufacturers points out that Lincoln and Washington, whose birthdays Americans celebrate in February, are tied for the honor of being America's tallest President. Both Lincoln and Washington stood six feet, four inches in stocking feet!

is a resting place suitable for America's most distinguished visitors to the White House!

All furnishings in the Lincoln bedroom except the mattress and spring are strictly from the Lincoln period, and a portrait of Lincoln hangs beside the famous bed. Marble-topped tables and canopies over lace curtains at the large, oversize windows recall the time of Honest Abe.

During the dark days of the Civil War, Lincoln put great stress on getting proper sleep — hence, his purchase of the famous Lincoln Bed from Philadelphia William H. Sharyl in 1861. The tens of millions of Americans who suffer from tension and sleepless nights well might take a tip from Honest Abe. Most of us sleep on beds of a size designed for our fathers and grandfathers — while we are taller than they were. Insurance figures and other statistics show that the average American is considerably taller than were his parents. In 1900, for example, only one American in twenty-five was six feet tall. Today, one American in five is a six-footer. And today's youngsters, statistics show, fortified by vitamins, fresh fruits and vegetables in winter that their parents didn't have, are growing taller still.

The Lincoln Bed is a fascinating historical item. It is made of carved rosewood, and in the center of the large oval shape on the headboard are two smaller recessed ovals. Near the top of the headboard one finds an applied carving of vines and leaves; in the cresting above this are similar carved figures. Certainly, this bed and its very modern mattress and spring

Fort Wayne Journal Gazette  
Fort Wayne, Indiana  
February 9, 1966

(incomplete)





**JOHNSON SAT HERE**—President Johnson and Rep. Leslie Arends (R., Ill.) chatted informally as they sat on the Lincoln bed at the White House last night. The occasion was a reception for members of Congress and their wives given by the President. Critic Sen. Wayne Morse (D., Ore.) sent his regrets. But Sen. William Fulbright was there and danced with Muriel Humphrey, wife of the Vice President.

—UPI Photo

WASHINGTON DAILY NEWS, FRIDAY, MARCH 4, 1968



'No, He Doesn't Sleep in It—He Sits on It.'



**The Washington News**

A SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPER  
 "Give him and the people will find their own way"  
 Richard Hollander, Editor

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SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 1966  
 Roy F. Mack, Business Manager

DL 7-7777

SCRIPPS-HOWARD

## OVER THE THRESHOLD OF THE WHITE HOUSE

*Continued from page four*



Dominating the Lincoln bedroom is the massive nine-foot bed. Lincoln and Wilson slept in it

*Harris & Ewing*



